

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 NSCE-00 /084 W

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P 291118Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9933

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

VAMEMBASSY AMMAN 04894856 248

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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DEPT PLS REPEAT TOSEC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ET, SU

SUBJECT: NIMEIRI COMMENTS PUBLICLY ON ERITREA

1. DURING PRESS CONFERENCE FOR VISITING JOURNALISTS MAY 27, NIMEIRI WAS ASKED AAETHER HE HAD RECEIVED ELF RESPONSE TO HIS INITIATIVE. PRESIDENT REPLIED (AS QUOTED IN MAY 28 AL-SAHAFI): "THE SETTLEMENT WHICH I PROPOSED TO THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE ERITREAN BROTHERS WAS BASED ON STOPPING THE FIGHTING AND SITTING TOGETHER WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS AFTER A GENERAL AMNESTY HAD BEEN DECLARED.... WE FOUND A RESPONSE (WHICH FBIS VERSION TRANSLATES AS "ACCEPT-ANCE") FROM THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE FIGHTING ERITREAN ORGANIZATIONS. THE ORGANIZATIONS ASKED FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE THEMSELVES AND AGREED

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TO SEND A UNIFIED DELEGATION TO MEET THEIR BROTHERS. UNTIL

NOW NO ANSWER HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THEM. ALSO THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ASKED WHAT HAS HAPPENED OR IS GOING ON. THE REASON IS (SIC) THAT WE DON'T KNOW THE LOCATION OF THE BROTHERS IN ERITREA, WHETHER THEY ARE INSIDE ERITREA OR ELSEWHERE."

2. PRESIDENT WAS ALSO ASKED WHETHER ELF SUCCESS MIGHT FEED SEPARATIST TENDENCIES IN SUDAN. HE REPLIED: "THE SUDAN DOES NOT FEAR ANY SUCH REACTION BECAUSE WHAT WE DID IN 1972 (THE ADDIS ACCORD) WAS WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE SUDANESE AND AT THEIR BEHEST. THE INDEPENDENCE OF ERITREA OR ITS NON-INDEPENDENCE HAS NO INFLUENCE ON US. THE SUDAN MIGHT HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON OTHER COUNTRIES, BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE FIRST WHICH OBTAINED INDEPENDENCE AND ONE OF THE FIRST TO MOVE AGAINST COLONIALISM IN AFRICA."

3. COMMENT: REFERENCE TO ERITREAN "INDEPENDENCE" HAS ALARMED NEW ETHIOPIAN CHARGE WHO PRESUMABLY REPORTING

TO ADDIS. HOWEVER, NIMEIRI'S REFERENCE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN HYPOTHETICAL AND IN NO SENSE AN ENDORSEMENT OF ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE ASPIRATIONS. IN FACT HIS SUBSEQUENT REMARKS IMPLY THAT NIMEIRI FAVORS REGIONAL AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA ALONG LINES SOUTHERN SUDAN.

4. SUBSEQUENT DRAFTING FOREGOING, I HAVE JUST SEEN ADDIS 6273. AS INDICATED ABOVE, NIMEIRI MADE NO STATEMENT AS REUTERS CLAIMS BUT WAS REPLYING OFF-CUFF TO ROUTINE PRESS QUESTION. WHILE HIS LANGUAGE THEREFORE WAS NOT PRECISE, BELIEVE HE MEANT THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN RESPONSIVE TO HIS PROPOSALS, NOT REPEAT NOT THAT THEY HAVE SPECIFICALLY ACCEPTED THEM. THIS CONFIRMED BY LATER SENTENCE IN FBIS VERSION (JUST RECEIVED) WHICH QUOTES NIMEIRI AS STATING THAT ERITREAN FRONT LEADERS "INTEND ENTER ERITREA TO HOLD CONFERENCE AND TAKE A DECISION REGARDING THE SUDANESE INITIATIVE."

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMNESTY, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PRESS CONFERENCES, LIBERATION FRONTS, PEACE TALKS, LIMITATIONS OF HOSTILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KHARTO01298
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750187-1128
From: KHARTOUM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750510/aaaaailx.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <22 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NIMEIRI COMMENTS PUBLICLY ON ERITREA
TAGS: PFOR, ET, SU, ELF, (NIMEIRI, JAFAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006